

BLAST VIDEO #6: A FATHER'S LOVE (Luke 15:11-32)

7.13.20

One of Christ's best-known parables is often called The Parable of the Prodigal Son. But we could just as easily think of it as The Parable of the Loving Father.

Once upon a time, a father had two sons. One day the younger son came to his father and said, "I want my share of the inheritance, my share of your estate." By most measures, this was a bold thing to say. In fact, it was downright rude, the equivalent of the son telling his father that he wished he was dead. And he didn't even ask for his share; he told him he wanted it: "Gimme my money!" But the father graciously agreed and divided up his estate between his two sons. A couple of days after receiving these funds, that younger son collected his belongings, and left home, heading for a distant country.

Now it's easy to acquire friends if you have money. But what this younger son didn't understand was that those kinds of friends are only going to last as long as your money does. Once the money's gone, so are the friends. And that's what happened here, too: Soon, as a result of spending all his money like it would last forever, all the money was gone.

At about the same time, a great famine swept over the land. Soon the kid began to feel the pangs of hunger and the reality of not having any money to even buy some food to eat. He was able to hire himself out to a citizen of that country, and he wound up with the job of feeding pigs. But his hunger had gotten so bad that he was even tempted to eat the pods that had been given to the hogs to eat. He was hungry, penniless and alone, and no one gave him anything. He had hit rock bottom.

Well, at some point sitting there at rock bottom, he began to come to his senses, and he realized what a colossal mistake he had made. He thought: *"How many of the guys who work for my dad have food to spare, and here I am starving to death" - Luke 15:17.* He then came to a decision: *"I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Dad, I blew it; I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants'" - Luke 15:18-19.* His life made a U-turn; he changed his life's direction, and that started with the confession to be given to his father that he had been wrong. The Bible calls that "repentance" and it literally means to change your mind so much that the very direction of your life becomes different. Repentance is a U-turn.

He started to return home, possibly rehearsing his speech every step of the way. Soon he recognized that he was finally approaching his father's home. He wondered what kind of reception he

would get. After all, he was the one who had left. His father was the injured party in all this. What would happen?

He soon learned. He saw a figure running toward him. As he came closer, he realized it was his father. Was he running so fast to attack him, to keep him away from his home?

But in a moment, his father was surrounding him with hugs and kisses. He couldn't believe what was happening to him. He tried to start his speech: "Dad, I blew it; I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But his father wouldn't let him finish. Instead, his father was shouting out orders ... to begin a celebration!

"Quick! Bring the best clothes to put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and the best sandals on his feet. And let's round up some food. We gotta have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So, they began to celebrate - Luke 15:22-24.

What an amazing story - and what an amazing love. Jesus told this story to illustrate what we all need to know about God's love. First, God's love is faithful. The father kept loving his son despite what his son had done. God said through the prophet Jeremiah: ***"I have loved you with an everlasting love" - God speaking, Jeremiah 31:3.*** Second, God's love is free. The son attempted in his confession to say he wasn't worthy to even be considered his son anymore, but the father would have none of it. You see, the father's love was not a love that could be earned, nor did it have to be. The son was loved because the son was back in relationship with his father. Paul said: ***For by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast - Paul, Ephesians 2:8-9.*** And third, God's love showed forgiveness. As soon as the son returned to the relationship, all the wrongs he had done to his father were forgiven. They were gone - as though they had never happened. God said through the prophet Isaiah: ***"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers your sins no more" - God speaking, Isaiah 43:25.***

No matter what wrongs we have committed, God stands ready to forgive it all. But the key, as the son realized, was found in being in relationship with his father. For us, forgiveness is all about being in relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ - God the Son. In believing that Jesus died for our sins, and in confessing our sins, we too can be in relationship with our Heavenly Father. And just like with that youngest son, we will be immediately restored to being a child of the Father.